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ADDRESS TO
DRUGGISTS AND
APOTHECARIES

1854

AN ADDRESS
TO
DRUGGISTS AND APOTHECARIES,
AND
THEIR CLERKS AND APPRENTICES.

ADOPTED BY THE
AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION,
...

AT ITS MEETING IN CINCINNATI, OHIO, JULY, 1854

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A D D R E S S .

The American Pharmaceutical Association, deeply impressed with the importance of adopting some measure by which the present and future apothecaries of this country may be improved in educational standing, viewed in reference to the practice of their profession, have determined to address their brethren everywhere in our widely extended country, believing that some good results may arise from the hints they will suggest.

By an inquiry extended to all sections of the Union, it has been ascertained that a vital defect exists in the very budding process of pharmaceutical education—the apprenticeship. In all the pharmaceutical institutions of Europe, where degrees are granted to apothecaries, the preliminary service in the shop is a *sine qua non* to admission to the examinations, it being generally four years, and in many of them the attendance on lectures follows this term of practical initiation into the duties of the shop and laboratory. In England, where as yet no degree-granting institution exists among pharmacutists, the apprenticeship system is carried out by indenture as in ordinary usage, so important is this preliminary training conceived to be to the education of a pharmaceutical chemist. In many stores in the Atlantic cities north of Virginia, and more especially in Philadelphia, a system of apprenticing exists, yet it rarely happens that a lad is legally indentured ; the idea of such an instrument being exceedingly repulsive to most boys who aim at the apothec-

cary business. In lieu of a legal indenture a feeling of honor-bound obligation should exist, equally binding on the part of apprentice and employer, capable of retaining the connection until the obligation is cancelled by termination of service and completion of education. For want of this tie between learners and employers, our country has been deluged with incompetent drug clerks, whose claim to the important position they hold or apply for is based on a year or two's service in the shop, perhaps under circumstances illy calculated to increase their knowledge. These clerks in turn become principals, and have the direction of others—alas! for the progeny that some of them bring forth, as ignorance multiplied by ignorance will produce neither knowledge nor skill.

When we investigate the causes of this state of things, it will be found to arise primarily in the want of a correct feeling of the dignity and responsibility of the calling of the apothecary as a branch of the medical profession. The larger number of those who deal in drugs and medicines do it solely to make money; they aim at making the most out of the least outlay of capital or trouble; to *sell* medicines is their vocation; and he is the best clerk who can sell the *most*, under whatever circumstances it is effected. To avoid the necessity of gaining the requisite knowledge of practical pharmacy, it is no uncommon habit to buy their preparations ready made, except the simpler ones, and at the lowest price, and the business, thus *shorn* of its most interesting department, the application of chemistry to the conversion of crude drugs into medicines, becomes a mere store keeping, where the drug clerk is kept putting up and selling parcels and bottles of medicines, the preparation of which, and the beautiful reactions often concerned in their manufacture, he is as complete a stranger to as though they did not exist. Is it any wonder then, that, after one or two years service, the apprentice should fancy that he had learned the business as a *seller* of drugs and chemicals, and becoming uneasy at the prospect of a four years term, breaks the slender connection that binds him to his employer, and starts out as a fledged clerk! In these days of manufacturing pharmacutists, when most of the nicer preparations, from Dover's powder to fluid extracts, are to be bought ready made, the temptation to purchase them is great,

even to the qualified principal, who thus saves himself the responsibility and trouble attending their manufacture ; but he is apt to forget the injustice thus done to his *protégés*, who are thus deprived of the important practical knowledge only to be gained by becoming familiar with the manipulations they involve. Having abandoned, to a large extent, the making of these preparations, such apothecaries are ready but too often to accept the agency of the numerous quackeries that abound to swell their sales, and from this are led into the origination of secret compounds and become quacks themselves. Further, they are induced to trench on the business of the tobacconist, and the variety storekeeper, by keeping their wares ; and sometimes to a considerable amount.

So long as this abandonment of the legitimate duties of the pharmacist is permitted, it is hopeless to expect that apprentices will feel that interest in the business they have embarked in that is excited when they are called upon to carry out the various chemical and pharmaceutical processes that properly belong to every well conducted apothecary shop.

Familiarity with those processes, in which the phenomena of mechanical division, solution, extraction, distillation and other operations are practically studied, is a true basis upon which to build the knowledge required by a skilful extemporaneous pharmacist, or prescriptionist, whose vocation includes the highest department of the art of an apothecary. It is indeed the only basis upon which it should repose. *Making* the officinal preparations is therefore an indispensable part of pharmaceutical education, and no apothecary, whose scheme of business does not include the preparation of at least a considerable portion of them, can efficiently educate those under his care.

It may be said that the preparation of the strictly pharmaceutical compounds by the manufacturer of character more surely supplies the dispenser with medicines of unexceptionable quality. This is only partially true, because the institution of such a branch of business by the qualified, soon calls into its scope unqualified and careless men, who look at profit and not at therapeutic power in the purchase and treatment of drugs. Besides, the temptation to expand their business is a strong inducement, even to the skilful, to make quantities of fugitive and easily de-

composable compounds, which are forced on distant markets, where they are to be dispensed, and where, too often, the dispenser deals them out in full assurance of their excellence. The gradual effect of this custom on the dispenser is to render him tributary to the druggist and manufacturing pharmacist for many preparations, the efficiency of which he is bound, by the highest calls of duty, to be personally assured of.

Before leaving this part of the subject we would urge a careful consideration of these hints by those of the brethren to whom they apply, that they may see whether their duty to themselves, to their apprentices and assistants, and to the medical profession, does not require them to prepare all the officinal medicines that their shops will admit of that are prone to deterioration, or are difficult to test. In this category certain of the extracts and of other classes of preparations are not included, where the use of steam or a vacuum pan, or some other peculiarity of the process may be required, not at the command of the apothecary. There are many chemicals that can be easily made in the smallest apothecary shop, from materials it must necessarily possess, and which will interest the apprentice, yet the safe guard which analysis offers to the apothecary, in protecting his stock of chemicals from adulteration, renders it less important to include these within the scope of his laboratory.

The correspondence with apothecaries before alluded to, has placed the Association in possession of many facts bearing on the condition of pharmacy and pharmaceutical education within the United States. It appears that the tenure of apprenticeship resting on the simple agreement of the parties apprenticed has become so lax, especially in the western States, that as a general rule very little dependence is placed upon it. Boys are taken at a venture by the year, the employer making the best bargain he can, feeling assured that the boy will leave or demand clerk's wages before he has been with him half a regular term. From this cause, it is stated, the number of half educated assistants is quite large, and presents a serious difficulty in the prosecution of business in the way it should be conducted. As the result of this condition of things it has been found that there are three classes of individuals engaged in pharmaceutical pursuits who claim the interest of the Association, and to whom more partic-

ularly this address is directed, viz: *First*, those who are imperfectly acquainted with pharmacy and are in business for themselves; *secondly*, those who have been but half educated as apprentices and who are now assistants receiving salaries, having the responsibility of business entrusted to them; *thirdly*, those who are now apprentices or beginners under circumstances and with ideas unfavorable to the acquirement of a thorough knowledge of the drug and apothecary business. Of course all those instances, which happily are not a few, where individual ambition or natural talent for study or business has triumphed over the difficulties alluded to, are not included.

In thus addressing the individuals composing these three classes, the Association disclaims all disposition to arrogate to its members, *as a body*, any superior claim to knowledge or skill. They have associated together to improve themselves, and to adopt measures to improve the profession of pharmacy at large. They know that these classes of individuals *exist*; they feel that a remedy is loudly called for, which, whatever it may be, can only be rendered efficacious by the consent and co-operation of the parties interested. It is, therefore, earnestly hoped, that this address will be received in the kindly spirit in which it is offered, and its suggestions examined and weighed by all who may feel themselves to belong to the classes addressed.

After a young man has commenced business he rarely feels disposed, or thinks he has time for systematic duty, and is apt to discard all attempts at it, depending on the occasional references to books rendered necessary by the absolute demands of business. This is a mistake, there is sufficient time if it is rightly applied. Let the young proprietor who feels his deficiency, make it a rule before making each preparation, as required, to read carefully the commentary in the Dispensatory, and afterwards note the correspondence or difference of his results with those laid down. This will cause him to detect errors, if they exist, or to correct his own, will soon give a constant habit of observation of great practical value, and will gradually excite an interest in the collateral branches of science, chemistry and botany, that, if pursued, will place him on the high road to professional competency. The young proprietor should adopt at first an honorable scheme of conducting business; he should de-

termine to sell *good* drugs and medicines, come what will, and in doing so he will have a right to the best prices whether he gets them or not. He should cultivate a good feeling toward the medical practitioners of his neighborhood, should study the interest of the latter so far as the efficiency of medicines is concerned, and physicians will soon, from interest, incline towards him. He will aid his success by storing his memory with general information useful to his patrons, and render himself as necessary to the comfort as he is to the health of his neighborhood by his willingness to give it out.

These remarks apply to the dispenser of medicines rather than to one doing a mixed or wholesale business; on the former mainly depends the progress of pharmacy, and remembering his own imperfect opportunities, he should give to his apprentices or subordinates the best tuition he is capable of. It is a mistaken and short-sighted policy in the apothecary to withhold instruction beyond the merest calls of business, under the impression that it will react unfavorably to his interest. The man who has efficient assistants will have his reputation increased instead of diminished, and this will be a safeguard against ingratitude, when it occurs.

To this end he should improve and extend his pharmaceutical library by annual additions; he should encourage the periodical literature of Pharmacy to keep posted up with the improvements and discoveries of the day, and he should exhibit such an interest in his apprentices or assistants as will encourage them to adopt a habit of study, which is the best safeguard against the temptations into which young men and boys are drawn, unless they have some regular object of pursuit.

The *second class*, or assistants but half educated, are a numerous and interesting portion of the pharmaceutical community. They are found every where, because the causes of their deficiencies exist every where, though not equally so. To induce these to do *now* what they should have done in their minority is the object of this appeal. The assistant, except in those instances where the pressure of business is continuous during business hours, has ample opportunities for study. He should not fail to embrace them on every occasion, whilst his mind is untrammelled by the troubles and responsibilities of the engage-

ments peculiar to the proprietor. He should beware of the idea that he "knows enough to conduct business." In offering himself as a pharmaceutical assistant, a young man tacitly declares that he is capable of conducting a dispensing establishment; that he is a fit adjunct to the physician in combatting disease. He assumes a responsible position, next only to that of his employer. In the eye of the law he *is* responsible, in the absence of his employer, for the conduct of business, and is actionable for the results of his own ignorance and carelessness. A proper sense of this should induce the assistant to qualify himself by study; to read regularly and understandingly, and assist his reading when necessary by experiment and observation. He should never let a false pride induce him to let an error pass over uncorrected, and he should always keep in view that his destiny is to be a proprietor, and act as becomes a pharmacist. By pursuing these suggestions many third or fourth rate assistants might command the best situations and good salaries.

The *third class*—the beginners or apprentices—call forth the earnest sympathy of the Association. It depends much on the employer and his chief assistant whether the apprentice will make rapid or slow progress, or whether he will ever make a good apothecary; it very much also rests with himself. Some dispositions are so inimical to tuition that no amount of pains will fashion them into shape; yet it often happens that a promising youth will grow into irregularities from the want of a little candid training on the part of the employer. If there is any one fault in American boys more prominent than another, it is the inclination to act independently of authority. The "young America" spirit leads to various ill results, one of the chief of which is imperfect education, whether professional, mercantile or mechanical. It is one phase of this ill spirit that is now filling the ranks of pharmacy with half educated clerks. Let the young apothecary do *well* what he attempts, and carry it out on all occasions, from the most menial service of the shop to the most accurate operation of the laboratory. Let him vie with his fellows in the graceful handling of the spatula and the pestle, in the neatness of folding a powder or bundle, in the accuracy of writing or attaching a label, and in the quick, quiet and courteous mode of conducting business at the counter; these are

all parts of the accomplishment of a perfect pharmacist. The beginner should early adopt the idea that his vocation consists of something besides a business for gaining a livelihood; it also partakes of the character of a liberal profession, and demands of its votaries that they uphold its ethics even at the sacrifice of gain, that they sell good medicines even if they get low prices, because it is wrong to dispense bad medicines when it is possible to get good. It would be well if every beginner could have a vision of the duties he has to perform before entering the precincts of the shop as an apprentice. This picture would discourage all but the earnest ones who, seeing beyond present inconveniences and annoyances, aim at the highest qualification. To these the apothecary's store, with all its petty details and trials, its busy days and tedious evenings, affords a field rich in the produce it yields to the unremitting exertions of the earnest student; as with Scheele and Davy so with many an one in our day. World-renowned celebrity will cling to names unsuspected of greatness, the early efforts of whose possessors are now confined to the narrow limits of the shop.

It is a misfortune to many that the idea of the lucrativeness of the apothecary business has long since obtained popular credence; and often the fond parent, anxious that his boy should be started on the road to fortune, has unwittingly doomed him to an unhappy companionship with the pestle and mortar, when in the counting room of the merchant or the workshop of the machinist he might have attained to their desires.

The numerous instances of individuals in other callings who have commenced as apothecaries, bear ample testimony to the truth of this statement, and are a speaking caution to all concerned, that the fitness of boys for pharmaceutical pursuits should be ascertained before placing them with apothecaries.

The difficulties in the way of sustaining schools of pharmacy will here, as in Europe, confine them to large cities, where the number of students and the accessories to study are numerous. Slow but regular currents will circulate between these and distant towns, and their Graduates, in seeking spheres of action, will carry back with them the principles they imbibe, and thus act as examples to their less favored brethren, altogether advantageous to the public weal. The vast importance, therefore, of good schools

of pharmacy, where the sciences pertaining to our art are regularly taught, is so evident, that this Association freely extends its countenance and encouragement to those already existing, and to all new efforts, claiming for them the patronage they deserve.

Such are some of the more prominent points at issue in the educational reform so greatly needed in the pharmaceutical body of the United States. If the incubus of quackery was removed, a general feeling of the necessity of better means of pharmaceutical education existed, and a strong chain of associations, linked together by fraternal feeling, established, the prospects of American Pharmacy would be flattering indeed. The most sanguine believers in progress do not expect a sudden reformation; but there are many who look with strong faith and much interest to the silent influence of a better education in working a change among the individuals of the profession, and it is the earnest hope of this Association that the hints now offered in this address will not be lost, but that many a brother, in his distant unpretending scene of action, will be induced to raise his standing and usefulness by personal exertions, and become a light to his brethren and a boon to his neighborhood.

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